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REMARKS

Claims 7 and 9-31 are currently pending. Claims 8 and 37-43 have been cancelled.
Claims 1-6, 32-36, and 44-55 have been previously withdrawn.

Dependent Claim 8 has been merged into independent Claim 7.

Overview of Improvement Over the Known Prior Art

The examiner based his rejections primarily on an interpretation of the Background of the Invention section of the application. The Background section, second sentence, states, "Casinos for instance, for regulatory and revenue generating reasons, keep statistics on how particular machines perform and how different locations in a casino affect performance of gaming machines." What this means is that the casinos keep a record of the performance of each gaming machine over time (e.g., weekly or daily payouts, pay-ins, etc.). This may have been performed by a casino operator walking around and recording the various meters in the slot machines, or more recently, downloading data from the slot machines to a central server. The casino operator sometimes also noted the physical location of the slot machine so the casino could compare the performance of a slot machine at a particular location with the performance of the same slot machine at another location.

The casino assigns a number on a "placard" to each machine, and the placard is affixed to the machine. The placard number can take any form compatible with the casino's database system, since the placard number is used by the casino to identify the particular machine. The placard number may also be created by the casino using an accepted standard. The prior art casino database could recall the data on a slot machine by the computer operator entering the placard number into a computer via a keyboard.

The Background section does not convey that a prior art computer program existed that could display the performance data of any slot machine by entering any one of the following identifiers into a computer: the unique machine identifier (a unique machine code), the placard number (a code created by the casino for retrieving data), or the location code. With Applicant's computer program, for example, the location code in a casino can be entered into the computer, and the identification of every slot machine that had occupied that location is displayed (Fig. 4, sub-window 410). The performance of every machine at that location can then be analyzed by the click of a button. This enables the casino to select the best slot

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machine for a particular location to generate the highest revenue. The slot machine data may be sorted by location, placard number, or machine code (e.g., Fig. 7 shows the slot machines sorted by placard number, which is why the placard numbers steadily increase).

In the prior art, as described on page 3 of the specification, only the placard number was used by a casino to identify the slot machine. Once the machine data was pulled up from the database using the placard number, the history of the movement of the machine around the casino could also be identified if such information was previously stored by the operator. To identify how the location affected performance, the machine data called up using the placard number had to be compared for the different locations of the machine. If the placard was removed from a first machine and put on a second machine, there was no way the past history of the first machine could be found (page 3, last 6 lines).

Accordingly, Applicant's basic system is not disclosed in the Background of the Invention section, since the prior art casino management systems were very limited and had no computerized means to simply identify a location in the casino and have the computer identify the various slot machines that had occupied that location and compare the performances of those slot machines. Although the examiner indicated on page 4 of the Office Action that it was conventional to be able to call up or sort information in a non-casino computer using any attribute, this is not how casino computer programs worked. There was previously no casino program that could call up all machines that have occupied a certain location. The benefits of this feature were not previously appreciated and is a selling point in Applicant's product. If anything, the examiner's broad statement about computer databases would suggest to identify the single slot machine currently at a particular location in a casino. That is not Applicant's invention. The pending claims primarily deal with a computer system that makes it easier for a casino to correlate various slot machines' performances with the machines' locations in the casino. Other functions of the system are described and claimed. Further details are described when discussing each independent claim.

The examiner rejected Claims 7-16, 18-23, and 26-28 as being obvious over the combination of the Background of the Invention section and Blad (US Pub. 2001/0048374).

Claims 7, 16, 19, 20, and 26 in this group are independent.

Dependent Claim 8 has been merged into Claim 7, and Claim 7 has been further clarified. Amended Claim 7 recites:

7. (currently amended) A casino management method for tracking history of gaming machines and casino locations, comprising the steps of:

assigning a respective location identifier to each location within a casino;

associating a respective machine placard with each machine within the casino;

associating a respective machine identifier with each machine within the casino;

tracking within a database a history of the correlation between location, placard and machine identifiers as machines and placards are moved within the casino; and

generating a report based on the tracked history in the database, the report organized according to any of the location identifier, the placard identifier, and the machine identifier, such that entering the location identifier into the database generates a report identifying machines that have been located at the location corresponding to the location identifier, entering the placard identifier into the database generates a report identifying machines that have been associated with the placard identifier, and entering the machine identifier into the database generates a report identifying machines that correspond with the machine identifier.

One embodiment of Claim 7 is described on page 11, lines 1-3, of the specification and shown in Fig. 4, where the operator may enter into the "Find By" window the machine ID, placard ID, or location ID, and all slot machines that have ever had that ID are displayed (see subwindows 410, 414, 412). Note that there are shown three slot machines that have occupied the location MYS.A.001.17. In the example, the performance data of any of those machines at that particular location can be viewed, which is recited in dependent Claims 11 and 12.

Claim 7 differs from the systems described in the Background of the Invention section in at least the following. There is no ability of the prior art databases to automatically pull up the identities of the various slot machines that have been in a particular location in the casino. Therefore, the casinos could not readily compare the performance results of two slot machines at the same location using a database.

The examiner cites Blad for its teaching of monitoring coin-operated machines using a remote computer and codes associated with each machine. Applicant concedes that it is prior art for slot machines to transmit performance data to a central server. However, neither Blad nor the Background of the Invention suggests that a location identifier may be used to identify

slot machines that have occupied that location in a casino. Blad is unconcerned about the physical location of the machine.

Accordingly, Claim 7 and its dependent Claims 9-15 are respectfully submitted to be allowable. Claims 9, 11, and 12 are particularly nonobvious due to further description of using the location identifier to obtain data on slot machines.

Regarding Claim 9, the examiner essentially stated that it is obvious to sort reports by different attributes, such as location, or identification. At most this would suggest to identify the single slot machine currently at a particular location in a casino. Additionally, the casino database programs are not generic spreadsheets but are unique to the gaming industry, so the standard would be prior art databases used in casinos. There is no suggestion for a casino database to identify multiple slot machines that have occupied an identified location. The examiner may be using hindsight to conclude otherwise. The invention provides a valuable tool for increasing casino revenue.

Independent Claim 16 recites:

16. (currently amended) A casino management method that tracks history of a plurality of gaming machines and casino locations, comprising the steps of:

tracking a respective first history of each gaming machine in a casino, each said first history including changes in location of the machine within the casino, changes in machine configuration, and machine performance;

tracking a respective history of each location within a casino, each said second history including a type of game at the location, denomination of the game at the location, and information associated with the location, wherein tracking a respective history of each location comprises entering a location identifier into the database to generate a report identifying machines that have been located at the location corresponding to the location identifier;

exchanging placards among the plurality of gaming machines while maintaining tracking of the first and second histories, said placards comprising a unique placard associated with each of the gaming machines.

As discussed above, the cited art in combination with the Background section does not suggest tracking a history of each location within a casino and exchanging placards while "maintaining tracking of the first and second histories" as claimed. In the prior art, histories are kept on the machines but the history of a location is not tracked, to Applicant's knowledge. So the machines that have occupied a certain location are not identified by simply entering a location identifier into the database. Also to Applicant's knowledge, as

mentioned on page 3 of the specification, once the placard is removed from a machine, there is no way to have a complete history of the machine using the prior art systems.

Accordingly, Claim 16 is allowable.

Independent Claim 19 recites:

19. (currently amended) A casino management method, using a computer system and a database, for evaluating performance of different gaming machines and locations within a casino, comprising the steps of:

associating a respective location identifier with each of a plurality of locations within the casino;

associating a respective machine identifier with each of a plurality of gaming machines within the casino;

tracking a relationship between a particular gaming machine and a particular location based on the location identifiers and the machine identifiers, such that entering a location identifier into the database generates a report identifying machines that have been located at the location corresponding to the location identifier;

placing a first gaming machine in a plurality of different locations within the casino;

evaluating a respective performance of the first gaming machine at each of the plurality of different locations; and

locating the first game machine in the casino based on the respective performances.

As discussed with respect to Claims 7 and 16, the prior art could not track, using a computer and a database, the machines based on location. Accordingly, Claim 19 is allowable.

Independent Claim 20 recites:

20. (currently amended) A casino management method, using a computer system and a database, for evaluating performance of different gaming machines and locations within a casino, comprising the steps of:

associating a respective location identifier with each of a plurality of locations within the casino;

associating a respective machine identifier with each of a plurality of gaming machines within the casino;

tracking a relationship between a particular gaming machine and a particular location based on the location identifiers and the machine identifiers, such that entering a location identifier into the database generates a report identifying machines that have been located at the location corresponding to the location identifier;

tracking respective additional information about each of different gaming machines at a particular location; and

generating a report providing a comparison of the respective additional information.

As discussed with respect to Claims 7, 16, and 19, the prior art could not track, using a computer and a database, the machines based on location. Accordingly, Claim 20 is allowable.

Independent Claim 26 recites:

26. (currently amended) A casino management method, using a computer system and a database, for evaluating performance of different gaming machines and locations within a casino, comprising the steps of:

associating a respective location identifier with each of a plurality of locations within the casino;

associating a respective machine identifier with each of a plurality of gaming machines within the casino;

tracking a relationship between a particular gaming machine and a particular location based on the location identifiers and the machine identifiers, such that entering a location identifier into the database generates a report identifying machines that have been located at the location corresponding to the location identifier;

tracking respective additional information about a particular gaming machine at each of different locations; and

generating a report providing a comparison of the respective additional information.

As discussed with respect to Claims 7, 16, 19, and 20, the prior art could not track, using a computer and a database, the machines based on location. Accordingly, Claim 26 and dependent Claims 27 and 28 are allowable.

The examiner rejected independent Claim 17 as being obvious over the Background of the Invention section of the specification.

Independent Claim 17 recites:

17. (currently amended) A casino management method, using a computer system and a database, for evaluating machine and location performances, comprising the steps of:

evaluating a first performance of a first gaming machine at a first location;

evaluating a second performance of a second gaming machine at a second location;

entering a location identifier into the database to generate a report identifying machines that have been located at the location corresponding to the location identifier and their performance data;

after relocation of the first gaming machine to the second location, evaluating a third performance of the first gaming machine at the second location; and

comparing the first performance and the third performance in order to generate comparative performance data for the first gaming machine according to location within a casino.

As discussed with respect to the previous claims, the Background does not suggest "entering a location identifier into the database to generate a report identifying machines that have been located at the location corresponding to the location identifier and their performance data." At most, the Background suggests that the casino operators track the history of each machine by using the placard number. The Applicant's system is a very desirable system, since now the casino can determine which machine performs best at a particular location by tracking the location rather than each machine.

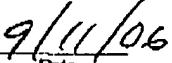
Accordingly, Claim 17 is allowable.

Dependent Claim 18 adds further limitations regarding tracking performance using the location identifier and is additionally nonobvious.

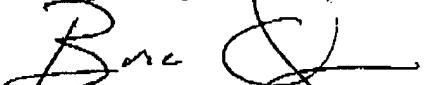
The examiner rejected Claims 37-43 as being anticipated by Weiss (US 6,511,377). These claims have been cancelled.

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Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are allowable. If the Examiner has any questions, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at 408-382-0480 x202.

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Respectfully submitted,


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